

§614.202 Time frames for filing requests for informal hearings.

(a) A request for an informal hearing before NRCS shall be filed within 30 days after written notice of the final decision, which is the subject of the request, is mailed or otherwise made available to the landowner or program participant. A request for an informal hearing shall be considered “filed” when personally delivered in writing to the appropriate reviewing authority or when the properly addressed request, postage paid, is postmarked.

(b) A request for appeal may be accepted and acted upon even though it is not filed within the time prescribed in paragraph (a) of this section if, in the judgment of the reviewing authority with whom such request is filed, the circumstances warrant such action.

§614.203 Mediation of adverse final decisions.

(a) Any dispute with respect to an adverse final decision related to the programs provided in §614.200 shall, at the request of the landowner or program, be mediated:

(1) Through certified individual in those States where a State Mediation Program has been established. Conservation district officials in certified State Mediation Program States may become certified by the State and utilized for mediation, if they choose to participate.

(2) In States where no certified mediation program is in effect, through mediation by a qualified representative of a local conservation district, if a local

conservation district chooses to participate. Upon mutual agreement of the parties, other individuals may serve as mediators.

(b)(1) The parties shall have not more than 30 days to reach an agreement following a mediation session. The mediator shall notify the designated conservationist in writing at the end of this period whether the parties reached an agreement.

(2) Any agreement reached during, or as a result of, the mediation process shall conform to the statutory, regulatory, and manual provisions governing the program.

(3) If the parties fail to reach an agreement within the specified period, the designated conservationist shall have up to 30 days after the conclusion of mediation to issue a final decision.

§614.204 Appeals of adverse final decisions.

(a) Any landowner or program participant, who is adversely affected by a decision made by a designated conservationist related to the programs in §614.200, may appeal the decision to the State Conservationist in the applicable State for an informal hearing or to NAD in accordance with 7 CFR part 11.

(b) The State Conservationist may designate a NRCS official to gather information and conduct the informal hearing before making a decision.

(c) Any landowner or program participant who is adversely affected by a decision of the State Conservationist may appeal to NAD in accordance with 7 CFR part 11.